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COMEDY OF A SICK FRIEND

He came in very dejectedly, with a set look on his face, like a man who contemplates an unpleasant crisis in his career and yet is trying to persuade himself that he doesn't care a hang anyhow. And to his surprise his little wife ran right up and kissed him.

"Your slippers are by the side of the Morris chair, John," she cried; "dinner will be ready in a minute!" And then fear frizzled him and discomfited him and he moodily regarded his slippers and once more rehearsed the ingenious excuse about a sick friend which he had framed up to deceive his loving wife and to explain the scandalously late hour and condition in which he had returned home the night before.

"Now!" she cried (bringing in the steak and onions). "Now, John!" And up John got and took his rightful place at the head of the table and solemnly cut the steak and spooned the fried onions.

"John," she began, "last night—" His fourth thought: "Here it comes!" And then aloud: "It was a sick friend!" he mumbled (with his mouth full of fried onions).

"John," she continued (as though she had not heard him), "Mrs. Robbins called last night."

"Oh!" he asked, with a sigh of relief, and he clutched with avidity at this frail conversational straw, Robbins, eh? Ah! Mrs. Thomas Robbins! I remember Tommy when he was a boy. I've sat up with him in nearly all his sicknesses, he remarked with emotion (and not without inspiration). "And he's sat up with me! And so Mrs. Robbins called, eh? Well, well!"

"Yes," she said, "And she had her new silk political on."

"Huh!" said he. "I do hate to see a woman showing off."

"Oh," she went on showing off, "John!" she cried. "I couldn't help but notice them, you know!"

"But she must have shown you the petticoat!" grumbled John.

"No," she replied. "I heard it rustle, and when she sat down I looked!"

And suddenly she became listless.

"I see," said John, "that the Russians haven't met the Japanese yet."

"Oh!" she remarked—very listlessly.

Whereupon John applied himself to his food stolidly, silently, biting his bread with deliberate precision, formally pointing each little finger into the air as he handled his knife and fork, blinking his eyes as he drank his water and trying to make himself believe that his dear little wife was not looking at him accusatorily.

"Did she look well in it?" he inquired (quite husky).

"Who, John dear?" she asked, and perhaps she sighed—the least faint echo of a sigh.

"Mrs. Robbins," he replied (with additional huskiness).

"Oh, fine!" she exclaimed (speaking now with animation). "She had on her gold watch and chain, too! Not half such a nice one as mine, though!"

"And you shall have a new silk dress too!" cried John—the guilt-stricken John—the proud John.

"And you won't stay out late to-night, will you, John?" she coaxed him. "I was so worried last night!"

"A sick friend," began John, mumbling.

"Mrs. Stafford was in to-day," she interrupted him.

"His fifth thought: 'Till bet that woman made Stafford tell her everything! That's the last time I'll ever go out with a hen-pecked man!'"

And then aloud: "Did she tell you?" hesitated John.

She smilingly nodded and placed the lobster salad on the table.

"And did she tell you about the policeman too?" insisted John, now determined upon making a clean breast of it. "Yes? And about the cabman? And how he upset his harness because he smashed Reddy's new plug hat? Yes? And after all this you go ahead and get a nice dinner ready for me—fried onions and lobster salad—and never nag me, and—"

And once again John banged his fist upon the table. "While you're about it," he cried, "you just buy yourself a hat and a silk petticoat, too!"

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WHAT THE PAPER READ

To the end of his day Ellithorpe will never forget his sensations when he read the simple, cold-blooded announcement in the society column of the newspaper.

The notice was to the effect that the engagement of Miss Rose Burlingame to Dovie Jenkins was announced. That was all, but it was the end of the world for Ellithorpe.

As he glared at the crumpled newspaper he admitted that he had dallied. For two years he had lived in the light of her presence and hadn't opened his mouth to tell her how he felt about it. He had always meant to do so, but he was shy. Never in his maddest dreams had he pictured any other girl wearing orange blossoms and a tulle veil for him.

If it had been any other man than Jenkins! But he was honest enough to admit that he would have been just as enraged and upset no matter who had been his lucky rival.

Ellithorpe rushed his dinner away without a look at the tempting chop and left the club. He wanted to walk and think it over. There was plenty to think about—what a fool he had been, for instance. He might have known others admired her as well as himself. What a conceited chump he had been to fancy it didn't matter when he spoke! There were always plenty of callers hovering about Rose, but he had been so wrapped up in his own liking for her he had not thought about anything else.

Now he was well paid for it. When on earth would he spend joyful evenings now? For he never could sit in the same room with the successful Jenkins without straining his eyes and grimacing.

How foolish! And how stupid! Suddenly an overpowering desire to see her again, to view her in the light of this stupendous change, came over him and he decided it was quite right he should call and offer his congratulations. He told himself miserably. All the way out there he was rehearsing different ways of doing this without giving her a hint of the anguish in his soul, for he had resolved never to let her know.

When he reached her street he had not decided whether to begin the conversation in a calm and everyday manner, gradually leading up in an incidental way to the news of her engagement as though he merely remembered to speak of it along with other pleasant news, or whether, in a sprightly and jesting manner, to plunge into the subject at once. He rather inclined toward the former as more likely to give Rose's vanity a letting down and to show her if she had any lingering suspicions as to his caring deeply for her that she was wholly mistaken.

The maid had ushered him into the Burlingame library and at sight of the familiar room his heart dropped several more notches. Decidedly he would choose the latter way; maybe he would even apparently forget to mention her engagement till he was ready to go home, just as though it had nearly slipped his memory.

"Good evening, Dick," she said just behind him.

Ellithorpe sprang to his feet. She was looking perfectly natural, happy and placid, not at all important as he had fancied she would, and she walked over to a settee as though nothing had happened.

Ellithorpe's eyes blurred and he realized to his horror that he couldn't follow out his programme. "I can't believe it, Rose," he heard himself saying, huskily.

"Believe what?" she asked in surprise, which grew as she noted his tragic attitude.

"This," said Ellithorpe dramatically, fishing out the newspaper folded at the fatal notice and handing it to her. As the girl scanned it her face turned crimson. There was a sparkle of wrath in her eyes.

"How perfectly horrible!" she cried, vehemently. "It's a mistake. I can't imagine who put it in. And Doyle Jenkins of all people! As though I—way, I never heard of such a thing!"

"You aren't engaged to him?" Ellithorpe shouted.

"I should say not!" said Rose decidedly.

It was then Ellithorpe found his wife and his voice. —Chicago News.

Old Things New with Home Finishes.

Have you any worn out chairs? If so, get a small can of L. & M. Home Finish Varnish from Holman-Cullum Hardware Co., Batesburg and in 30 minutes make the chair as good as new. Full directions on each can.

BAT IN HER HAIR.

A Housemaid in San Rafael had a Trying Experience.

San Rafael is suffering from an invasion of bats, and despite the strenuous efforts of the citizens the winged pests have gained a strong foothold in various parts of the town. Because of their activity Miss Lillian Steadman, a pretty young housemaid employed at the Hotel Rafael, is mourning the loss of her golden tresses and incidentally suffering from a shock to her nervous system.

Miss Steadman climbed to the attic in the hotel on Saturday evening determined to drive out some of the bats. She was surrounded soon by a drove of the winged rodents and proceeded gamely to give battle to them.

One of the bats lodged in the young lady's hair and refused to budge. Miss Steadman, thoroughly frightened, ran screaming from the attic and the bat still clung to her, keeping busy with his saw-like wings till he had succeeded in cutting her beautiful tresses so badly that it was necessary to shear them off, much to the sorrow of the girl and her admirers.

Grievous Private Museum.

The miscellaneous objects which have been collected by Harry de Windt, the traveler, who has started on a reindeer trip in the Laplands, form a grievous private museum. A Buddhist praying wheel, the skull of a Dyak warrior, Dyak shields adorned with hair from the scalps of enemies, daggers and spears in abundance, a Russian convict's dress, a set of chains which once hung from the legs and arms of a Siberian prisoner, and a genuine English cat-o-nine-tails are among the most curious

objects in the collection. The traveler, who has started on a reindeer trip in the Laplands, form a grievous private museum.

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DEALERS LIKE OLD FRAMES.

They Sell Worthless and Spurious "Old Master" Pictures.

Nothing more readily soils a worthless and spurious "old master" hideous with all the blatant tricks of the fabricator, than an old frame. This is the bait which is most killing. But dealers themselves often buy pictures for their frames. At the celebrated sale of the Sellers collection, most of which were copies and were of little value as works of art, the dealers were actually bidding for the frames only.

To the experienced eye the peculiar patina which age has imparted to those old frames cannot be imitated. But the old styles have, on account of the enormous demand, been repeated in modern days as copies sold as such, or as "faked" frames having a spurious suggestion of age artfully imparted to them by skilled workmen.

Ancient Flying Machine.

Now that so much attention is being paid to the problem of navigating the air, it may not be amiss to recall that a strange effort in this direction was made just 400 years ago. It was in September, 1507, that King James IV, sent a special ambassador from Edinburgh to France. An adventurer, John Damian, who had gained the favor of the king, said that he would reach France before the ambassador by simply flying there. He had a pair of huge wings made of eagles' feathers, fastened them to his body, and in the presence of thousands of people he launched himself into the air from the walls of Stirling Castle. Instead of rising, though, he fell to the ground and broke his leg. The air navigator's excuse for his failure was that some cock's feathers had been mixed in with the eagle's plumes, and that

the wings were not properly constructed.

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